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## MEASURING IMPACT

# FRAMEWORK FOR THE BIODIVERSITY CROSS-MISSION LEARNING PROGRAM

**July 2015**

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## **PREPARED BY**

Measuring Impact Project Team: Environmental Incentives, Foundations of Success, and ICF International

## **SUBMITTED BY**

Elizabeth Lauck  
Environmental Incentives, LLC

## **SUBMITTED TO**

Rebecca Butterfield, Contracting Officer Representative  
Office of Forestry and Biodiversity/Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and the Environment  
United States Agency for International Development

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Environmental Incentives, LLC  
1606 20<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
Tel: 202.525.2450  
Email: [elauck@enviroincentives.com](mailto:elauck@enviroincentives.com)  
Web site: [www.enviroincentives.com](http://www.enviroincentives.com)

## **DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>CLA</b>	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
<b>CMP</b>	Conservation Measures Partnership
<b>DEC</b>	Development Experience Clearinghouse
<b>E3</b>	Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and Environment
<b>ECO</b>	Environmental Communication, Learning, and Outreach
<b>FAB</b>	Forestry and Biodiversity Office
<b>FSN</b>	Foreign Service National
<b>IR</b>	Intermediate Result
<b>LOP</b>	Life-of-Project
<b>MI</b>	Measuring Impact
<b>PAD</b>	Project Appraisal Document
<b>PPL</b>	Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning
<b>RM Portal</b>	Natural Resources Management and Development Portal
<b>TEC</b>	Technical Evaluation Committee
<b>TOC</b>	Theory of Change

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## SECTION I

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Education, and the Environment/Office of Forestry and Biodiversity (E3/FAB) launched the five-year Measuring Impact program (MI) to help strengthen USAID's biodiversity programs by building the capacity of the Agency to design, monitor, and evaluate effective programs and by enhancing the evidence base that informs programming decisions. A core programmatic strategy of MI is to "Improve Biodiversity Conservation Approaches" with the life-of-project (LOP) objective that E3/FAB and the Missions engaged with MI have a greater understanding of conditions under which commonly deployed conservation strategic approaches are effective. To accomplish this, MI is working with E3/FAB to design and implement a Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program (Learning Program) to systematically capture and share lessons on theories of change<sup>1</sup> (TOCs) for common conservation strategic approaches in the USAID biodiversity portfolio.

Building on the approach suggested by the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL), the Learning Program will take a "community of practice" perspective on knowledge creation, sharing, and synthesis. The program will form Collaborative Learning Groups (Learning Groups) to develop and pursue shared Learning Agendas of questions and topics focused on specific TOCs. USAID Missions, the E3/FAB Office, and possibly other entities, such as USAID's implementing partners, will be invited to participate.

MI will pursue every opportunity to work in close collaboration with PPL to design and implement the Learning Program as part of the Bureau's larger strategy to promote collaboration, learning, and adapting within the Agency. MI will focus on tailoring high-value engagements to meet Missions' staff needs and ensure that activities match Learning Group

members' time constraints and other factors that limit participation. Simultaneously, MI will seek, document, and share lessons related to selected TOCs and facilitate Learning Groups to collaboratively produce and share knowledge.

The Learning Program, implemented through a four-step process, will (1) prioritize strategic approaches for learning, (2) engage Missions in the Learning Program, (3) develop Learning Agendas in collaboration with Missions, and (4) facilitate cross-Mission knowledge generation, sharing, and synthesis to accomplish the defined Learning Agendas. Throughout implementation, MI will capture institutional knowledge and share lessons on the effectiveness of conservation strategic approaches and create models for learning in biodiversity programming. As the Learning Program becomes operational, a variety of technical analyses and communications products will be developed that include syntheses of existing evidence that support selected TOCs, syntheses of results from Learning Group efforts to address their defined Learning Agendas, curated data and evidence repositories, live and recorded webinars, and in-person workshops.

Key outcomes that will mark the success of MI's effort to build the Learning Program include:

- The Learning Program is functional and poised for post-MI sustainability.
- A significant, increasing number of Missions are engaged in cross-Mission learning.
- Up to five analyses of conditions under which (1) selected conservation strategic approaches are effective or (2) cross-Mission learning is effective are completed.
- Information from the Learning Program is accessible and relevant for project design and management.
- As the fundamental measure of success, the E3/FAB Office and at least five Missions are using cross-Mission learning to inform the design and management of biodiversity-funded conservation programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The term, *theory of change*, is used to generally describe the sequence of outcomes that are expected to occur because of implementation of an action (Weiss, C. H. 1995. "Nothing as practical as a good theory: exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families." In J.P. Connell, J. L. Aber, and G. Walker, editors. *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and context*, pages 65-92. Aspen Institute, Washington, D.C., USA; <http://www.theoryofchange.org>).

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## SECTION II

# INTRODUCTION

As a leader in global efforts to conserve biodiversity and safeguard the natural environment from unsustainable human impacts, USAID dedicates more than \$200 million yearly to its biodiversity portfolio to support diverse strategic approaches to biodiversity conservation. These approaches are continually tested, refined, and improved.

Learning from experiences in order to improve future actions has been a priority within USAID for decades. Over the years, a number of staff trainings, working groups, communities of practice, knowledge repositories, formal guidance, and other efforts to improve knowledge generation and sharing have been implemented through both general and sector-specific initiatives. In 2010, USAID launched “USAID Forward,” a reform program to change the way the Agency designs, procures, and evaluates development programs to improve collaboration, learning, and adaptive management. With the development and escalating implementation of the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) framework by the Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL), learning is intentionally and increasingly being embedded into operationalization of the various stages of USAID’s approach to delivering development assistance ([the Program Cycle](#)). Most of the focus for these efforts to date, however, has been in building a learning culture at the Mission or other Operating Unit level with only moderate cross-pollination of ideas and lessons occurring amongst USAID’s Missions. As a result, there exists both a critical need and an invaluable opportunity to bring the results of activity-, project-

and country-level learning efforts to the global scale of USAID’s portfolio, significantly improving the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation strategic approaches across the world.

In response to USAID Forward,<sup>2</sup> the Forestry and Biodiversity Office within the Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment (E3/FAB) created the Measuring Impact (MI) program, a five-year contract implemented by Environmental Incentives, LLC, Foundations of Success, and ICF International.

MI is focused on enhancing the technical capacity of E3/FAB to improve practices in the implementation of the USAID Program Cycle, design and implement a model Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program (Learning Program), and support evidence-based programming through the development of a biodiversity research program.

The purpose of this document is to establish the shared vision between E3/FAB and MI for the Learning Program, identify the processes and tools needed to implement it, and begin to define the specific tasks that need to be accomplished, with associated roles and responsibilities. It is intended to serve as the roadmap for implementation and continuing refinement of the Learning Program.

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<sup>2</sup> MI is designed to directly support two objectives of USAID Forward: “Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation and Transparency” and one of the focal areas of “Science and Technology.”

## SECTION III

# CONTEXT FOR THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEARNING PROGRAM

The design and implementation of the Learning Program will draw on the rich body of experience, expertise, recognized best practices, and research in organizational learning in USAID and from the broader scientific community. It is also critical to identify entities, activities, processes, and policies in USAID that potentially interface with the Learning Program's purpose and envisioned activities so that needs for collaboration and coordination can be addressed and opportunities pursued. This section describes the institutional context for the Learning Program within USAID and the MI project. It briefly summarizes the scientific literature on organizational learning, current and previous USAID learning efforts, and implications for the Learning Program.

## Institutional Context

A core principle of USAID is that an intentional and collaborative strategy for continuous learning through all stages of the Program Cycle is essential to achieve results. For biodiversity conservation programming, the CLA framework and the USAID Biodiversity Policy are key drivers within USAID in the operationalization of that principle. Together they define the major conceptual and contextual landscape within which the Learning Program will operate.

PPL has developed guidance and extensive resources to help Missions apply the CLA approach. MI will pursue every opportunity to work in collaboration with PPL to design and implement the Learning Program in a coordinated fashion as part of their implementation of the CLA framework. The Agency's Biodiversity Policy mandates increased learning and evidence-based programming. MI, including specifically the Learning Program, will work with E3/FAB to support Missions and Operating Units as they improve practices in these areas. In particular, the Learning Program will reinforce the use of theories of change (TOCs) to improve project design and as a framework for learning, and

will be strongly focused on advancing learning through adaptive management, evaluation, research, and knowledge management.

MI uses four separate but interconnected strategies to improve the Agency's biodiversity programming capacity. Those programmatic strategies are organized in four Intermediate Results (IR) groups. The roles of each IR in developing, implementing, and supporting the Learning Program are:

### **IR1: Capacity Building for Best Practices in the Program Cycle**

- Support the integration of learning into activities and business practices
- Facilitate participation of MI focal Missions in Cross-Mission Learning Program

### **IR2: Improve Biodiversity Conservation Approaches**

- Lead Learning Program development and implementation
- Facilitate Collaborative Learning Groups (Learning Groups)
- Gather and synthesize information and lessons for distribution

### **IR3: Establish the Evidence Base**

- Support Learning Groups with targeted research on key questions

### **IR4: Synthesis and Outreach**

- Communicate Learning Program lessons to the wider conservation and development communities

## The Science of Organizational Learning

Individuals and teams in organizations continuously accumulate experience as they carry out their daily tasks. Important new knowledge that arises from these experiences diffuses organically throughout the



organization as people share information and stories, especially about challenges and novel solutions. Targeted research can complement and supplement daily experiences and improve knowledge generation. Individuals embed new knowledge into decisions and actions when beneficial and practical. The process by which individual experience leads to changes in the decisions and actions of others in the organization is known as “organizational learning.”

A large body of research and analysis is devoted to understanding the components, processes, and enabling conditions for organizational learning. MI staff has prepared a separate technical analysis<sup>3</sup> to inform the design of the MI Learning Program, and its findings and recommendations are woven throughout this document. The analysis, which synthesized key findings from the literature and USAID insights gained in a series of targeted, key informant interviews, yielded the following fundamental guidance for developing an effective approach to organizational learning in the USAID context. (See Annex A for additional guidance that emerged from the analysis.)

**Provide for relationship building.** Effective organizational learning occurs when individuals, whether in the same or different operational units, communicate efficiently and share relevant knowledge in an environment of openness and trust. This environment can be fostered through activities that support relationship-building throughout the organization, incentives that encourage knowledge sharing, and prioritization of learning by the organization’s leadership.

**Make generated knowledge relevant and useful.** Just as important as the enabling environment for learning is the relevance and usefulness of new knowledge for individuals that might adopt it. Any learning effort must focus on the needs of the organization and the individuals that could benefit from it. The content and form of new knowledge determines its usefulness to individuals who may need it and the likelihood of its being integrated into the organization’s actions.

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<sup>3</sup> “[Making Use of the Portfolio: Organizational Learning at USAID](#),” which draws upon publications and interviews of staff associated with the following USAID learning initiatives: Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group; Agrilinks; Climate-Smart Agriculture Interagency Working Group; Combating Wildlife Trafficking Working Group; Feed the Future; Food Animal System Team; Food Security and Nutrition Network; FRAMEweb; GROOVE Network; K4Health and Global Health Knowledge Collaborative Practice; Knowledge Management Reference Group; Learning Lab; Resource Management Portal; SCAPES Learning Program.

### **Focus learning by establishing a common conceptual framework, such as a TOC.**

Identifying and prioritizing common knowledge needs across an organization can be a significant challenge. Individuals vary significantly in their perspectives and how they frame similar issues. It can be difficult or impossible to describe knowledge gaps without a common conceptual understanding of the issue at hand, especially with groups that are geographically dispersed, have diverse knowledge bases, and bring different cultural contexts. The TOC tool (Box 1) can help focus learning efforts by establishing a common conceptual framework for exploring knowledge gaps, assumptions, and key questions related to a specific strategic approaches for biodiversity conservation.

## **Previous and Current USAID Learning Efforts**

PPL’s Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research is leading the Agency’s efforts to address factors that affect organizational learning at USAID. The Learning Lab website provides a means for people to connect online and facilitate knowledge exchange on project design, implementation, and adaptation (the Program Cycle). The site hosts small groups or “communities of practice” for people with similar professional interests in implementing the Program Cycle to come together to build stronger relationships and transfer knowledge. The Learning Lab also hosts a Learning Library, a repository for documents on learning approaches and aspects of the Program Cycle.

Within the technical sectors, there have also been a variety of learning efforts, including [Agrilinks](#) (agriculture), [K4Health](#) (health), and [FRAMEweb](#) (environment), with several still ongoing and others planned for the future. These efforts have mostly focused on knowledge management and staff training. None of these efforts have taken a TOC approach to capture related information and lessons.

In general, USAID’s learning efforts concentrate on two levels: (1) USAID internal working groups and task forces and (2) external-facing networks that engage partners and the larger development community. These two kinds of efforts have experienced different challenges and successes.

The internal groups tend to form quickly in response to a specific event or challenge, such as a new presidential priority. They involve a few staff that usually share a similar technical specialty or focus,

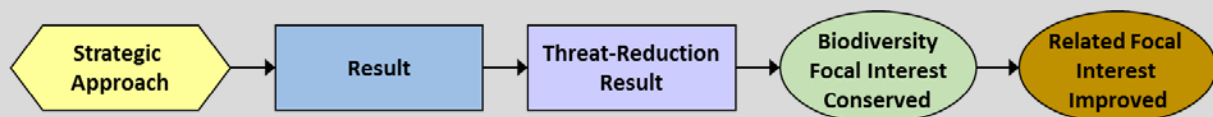
often within the same technical office. Sometimes the groups are cross-sectoral, such as the Gender Working Group. These groups usually comprise staff that know each other well and already have well developed trust. They can be usually be started and maintained without funding because they piggyback on existing USAID internal communications infrastructure, such as Adobe Connect and local meetings.

The challenge, however, is maintaining focus and participant interest after short-term tasks are completed, other priorities emerge, or with staff

turnover. Staff participating in groups often have different interests and learning needs, which contributes to the challenge. Without efforts to understand and adapt to the learning needs of all group members, learning efforts can become dominated by the priorities of a few members, limiting the value that is derived by other participants and leading to declining motivation and participation. These internal groups tend to rely on in-person meetings and phone calls and less on online document repositories or other tools that would facilitate longer-term storage and knowledge retrieval.

## BOX 1. USE OF RESULTS CHAINS FOR DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE

Results chains are a powerful tool integrated into the Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation ([www.conservationmeasures.org](http://www.conservationmeasures.org)) that are used to develop and illustrate a theory of change. Results chains are a widely accepted tool applied in an adaptive management framework that brings together common concepts, approaches, and terminology in project design, management, and monitoring—in order to assist practitioners in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of conservation projects. USAID has adapted the Open Standards method, incorporating agency terminology for each factor. A results chain can be used to show how a project team believes a particular development hypothesis will lead to desired results, contribute to reducing threats, and ultimately lead to the conservation of priority biodiversity or other focal interests. Result chains are presented in a diagram that map out a series of causal statements that link short-, medium-, and long-term results in an “if...then” fashion, leading ultimately to the expected impacts on the focal and related interests.



**Strategic Approach:** A set of actions undertaken by the implementing partners to reach one or more results and ultimately reduce threats to improve the viability of the biodiversity focal interest.



**Result:** A specific benchmark or milestone that implementing partners are aiming to achieve *en route* to accomplishing the project purpose as a result of the strategic approaches (e.g., rangers have improved knowledge, more effective law enforcement). There can be many results in a development hypothesis; outcome statements are developed for key results.



**Threat-reduction result:** A specific type of intermediate result that represents a reduction in a direct threat to the focal interest (e.g., decrease in illegal hunting)



**Focal Interest:** An element of biodiversity at a site, which can be a species, habitat/ecological system, or ecological process that an implementing partner has chosen to focus on (e.g., elephants, forests).



**Related Interest:** In the context of a conservation project, related interest features focus on those components of human wellbeing affected by the status of biodiversity focal interests (e.g., livelihoods from ecotourism).

In contrast, external-facing efforts tend to have longer staying power<sup>4</sup> but are more expensive to develop and maintain. Several large networks have developed and been sustained in the health, agriculture, and business development sectors, such as the K4Health project that is a continuation of a USAID-supported knowledge management effort started in 1973.

External-facing efforts promote knowledge sharing among USAID staff, implementing partners, and the larger development community. Large websites store documents and other online resources, host online discussions and webinars, and bring together diverse groups. Like Learning Lab, smaller groups often have space on the larger, central site for private discussions and documents that can be accessed only by the smaller, restricted group. Facilitators often struggle to maintain engagement and participation from the site's general visitors and small-group members.

USAID learning efforts that use offline interactions, such as conferences, meetings, and workshops, to bring people together and build strong relationships are the most successful because they can often transition in-person knowledge exchanges to the online environment, as was done by the [GROOVE Network](#). Well-bonded groups are brought together to solve real-world problems, such as troubleshooting technical issues. To a lesser extent, facilitators can initiate and maintain member interaction through webinars and time-limited discussion boards. These events are successful when they are relevant, easy to join, and provide value to projects and tasks that members are working on. As with internal groups, external-facing groups struggle to maintain motivation and participation over time, often because new information and lessons generated are not relevant to large segments of the membership.

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<sup>4</sup> External-facing groups tend to have more staying power because they are developed and maintained by large, multiyear project mechanisms that ensure short- and medium-term stability. Long-term sustainability often depends on continued support from USAID or other partners.

## Implications for the Learning Program

Following E3/FAB's focus on supporting Missions and other Operating Units, the Learning Program will be a primarily<sup>5</sup> internal-facing effort that will span large geographic distances. It will face many of the challenges that both internal- and external-facing networks experience. The Learning Program will be a hybrid, with an internal network that has budget and technical capacity for facilitation (at least within the timeframe of MI) and also an online platform to help maintain group focus and stability and provide a storage facility for group outputs.

In order to maintain engagement, the Learning Program will need to stay responsive to members' needs by focusing on topics that are highly relevant to participants' priority projects and tasks. This will be accomplished by organizing learning around TOCs (Box 1) and engaging participants in identifying the specific questions they would like answered to improve the effectiveness of their conservation work.

Lessons related to key questions can be identified both through focused literature reviews carried out primarily by MI and through facilitated activities and discussions with Learning Program participants in the Learning Program. In both cases, efforts will need to focus on producing easily accessed knowledge that is directly applicable to participants' future actions and decisions.

See Annex A for the full set of recommendations for the design of the Learning Program that emerged from the separate technical analysis of organizational learning referenced above.

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<sup>5</sup> The Learning Program will focus initially on Agency staff and include implementing partners as needed and invited by Mission staff when appropriate and feasible. See section 5 for more information.

## SECTION IV

# PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

The Learning Program's overarching life-of-project (LOP) objective is to advance E3/FAB and Mission understanding of conditions that make commonly deployed conservation strategic approaches effective. To achieve this objective, the Learning Program will systematically capture and share learning on TOCs for common priority conservation strategic approaches. TOCs will be used as the means to define the outcomes expected as a result of implementation of a common strategic approach and to identify the assumptions made about why the strategic approach should lead to the defined outcomes. By comparing the expected outcomes with real-life outcomes, assumptions will be tested and an improved understanding of the conditions under which certain strategic approaches work or do not will be developed.

Using this TOC-approach, the Learning Program will:

- Strengthen the evidence base for biodiversity conservation decisions and ensure that experiences and observations are shared as guidance on future program decisions.
- Provide a platform to increase coordination and collaboration among USAID, implementing partners, and stakeholders to capture institutional knowledge and share learning on common biodiversity strategic approaches.
- Create a model for working together and begin to institutionalize a culture of collaboration, sharing, and learning among USAID program and project managers, implementers, and stakeholders.

Key outcomes that will mark the success of MI's effort to build the Learning Program include:

- The Learning Program is functional and poised for post-MI sustainability.
- A significant, increasing number of Missions are engaged in cross-Mission learning.
- Up to five analyses of conditions under which (1) selected conservation strategic approaches are effective or (2) cross-Mission learning is effective are completed.
- Information from the Learning Program is accessible and relevant for project design and management.
- As the fundamental measure of success, the E3/FAB Office and at least five Missions are using cross-Mission learning to inform the design and management of biodiversity-funded conservation projects.

Section 7 and Annex C contain specific Learning Program LOP and performance objectives.

## SECTION V

# IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES, WORK FLOWS, AND TOOLS

The Learning Program is to be implemented through a four-step process (Figure 1) that (1) prioritizes TOCs for learning, (2) engages Missions in the Learning Program, (3) develops a Learning Agenda in collaboration with Missions, and (4) facilitates cross-Mission knowledge generation, sharing, and synthesis to accomplish the Learning Agenda. Throughout implementation, MI will work to capture institutional knowledge and share lessons on the effectiveness of conservation strategic approaches, and also create models for learning in biodiversity programming.

MI will use a dual approach by (1) taking the lead to seek, document, and share lessons on selected TOCs and (2) simultaneously facilitating discussions among Learning Program participants to collaboratively produce and share knowledge. With both approaches, MI will develop tools and processes to synthesize and disseminate key lessons for use in future conservation actions by group members and the larger conservation community.

The steps MI plans to use to implement the Learning Program are described below.

## Step 1: Select TOCs for Cross-Mission Learning

The first step is the selection of priority topics for learning. MI will conduct a thorough literature review on the selected topics and explore past and ongoing Mission activities to document current knowledge as a base for future learning.

To select topics for learning, MI has developed an inventory of current biodiversity strategic approaches and their associated threats and focal interests that might be relevant to most Missions' current biodiversity-funded projects.

### BOX 2. KEY TERMS DEFINED

#### **Collaborative Learning Group (Learning Groups):**

A group of Mission and other Operating Unit staff that are brought together to collaboratively generate, use, and share learning on explicit questions and topics associated with a specified TOC. Learning Groups may include implementing partners as needed with invitation by Mission staff as appropriate and feasible.

**Learning Agenda:** A set of questions and topics focused on the assumptions and enabling conditions of a specified TOC that a Learning Group has defined to address together to improve program effectiveness.

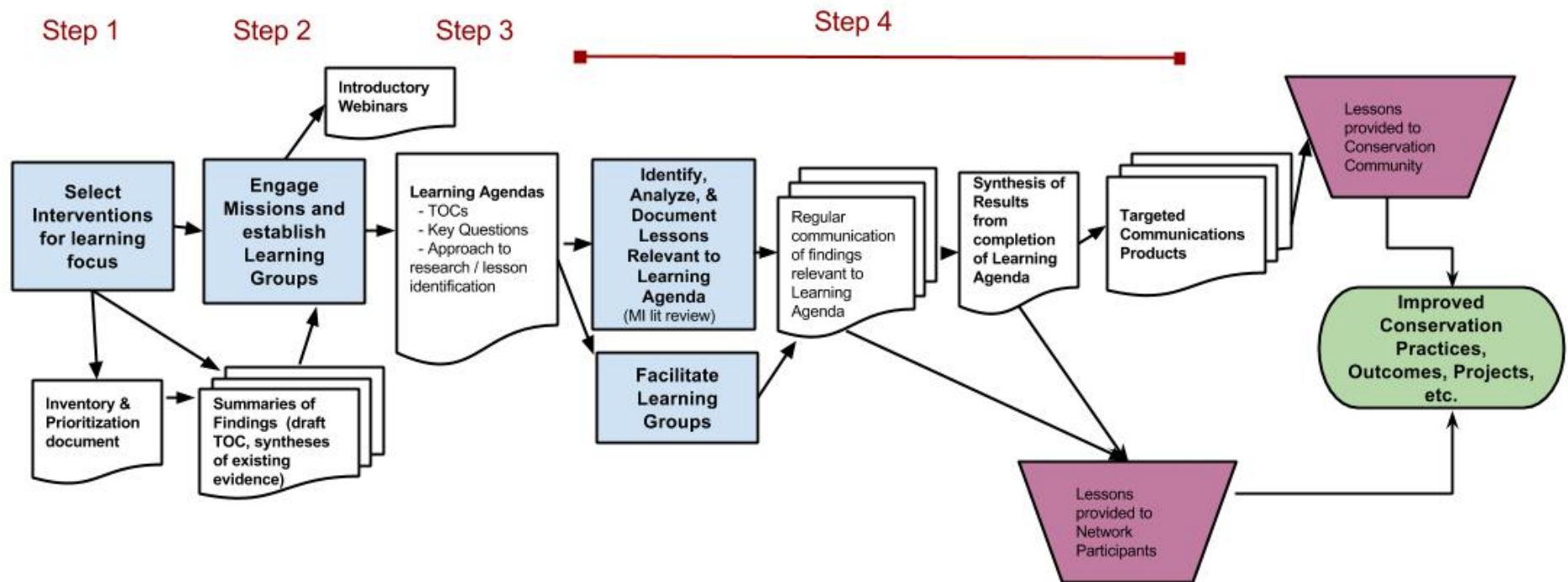
**Summary of Findings:** A document that summarizes evidence and apparent evidence gaps associated with a specified TOC for use as a starting point for the Learning Groups as they develop Learning Agendas.

MI analyzed the inventory to identify a short list of conservation strategic approaches for E3/FAB to consider for further learning. In June 2014, E3/FAB selected the following as initial priorities for the Learning Program:

- Sustainable livelihoods
- Compliance and enforcement
- Laws, policies, and regulations

As the Learning Program develops, additional strategic approaches may be selected using a similar process.

## Learning Program Implementation Process



**Figure 1.** The four-step process for implementing the Learning Program. Blue boxes represent processes; white elements represent communication products, such as documents, database, webinars, and workshops; purple trapezoids represent outcomes; and green ovals represent project impact. Note that this is not a results chain.



After selection of the focal strategic approaches, MI will produce a “Summary of Findings” as a resource to help Learning Groups understand what is already known about the selected TOC. The Summary of Findings may be delivered through a series of products that will be developed and disseminated to interested USAID practitioners as information becomes available and is analyzed by MI or third parties. Taken together as a Summary of Findings, these products will include the following information:

- Specific strategic approaches and their TOCs that are likely relevant to Missions
- Lessons available from the literature and USAID practice on the effectiveness of strategic approaches
- Gaps in information from the literature on the effectiveness of strategic approaches
- Potential learning questions derived from the assumptions in the TOCs
- Possible Learning Group participants

For each Summary of Findings, MI will review data sources for information on strategic approaches that any Mission has used in its current or recent biodiversity programming. IRI focal Missions are likely to have the most readily accessible information. This information will be used to develop a draft of a high-level, generalized TOC in the form of a results chain that is specific to USAID Missions, which will then be used to identify key assumptions on specific actions planned or being implemented and their intended outcomes, including reducing threats to biodiversity and improving the status of biodiversity focal interests.

After MI drafts a TOC, it will search and review available literature on the effectiveness of the select strategic approaches. The search for project- and activity-related documents and guides and other literature will begin on USAID’s Natural Resources Management and Development Portal (RM Portal) and the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). The literature review will focus on collecting and summarizing lessons that apply to the assumptions in the draft TOC as they relate to current Mission projects and activities with Biodiversity funding. This review of internal literature will be supplemented by reviews of the peer-reviewed and grey literature outside of USAID, with the comprehensiveness of those reviews dictated by available resources and guidance of MI Activity Managers.

MI will also identify questions about unknown or untested assumptions for each TOC to derive a Learning Agenda, described in Step 3.

## Step 2: Engage Missions for Participation in Cross-Mission Learning

MI will approach Missions through multiple channels to make them aware of the Learning Program. Initial communications with Missions need to make a strong case for participating in the program, set realistic expectations for the program’s benefits, and define the effort required for participation. Communications will highlight:

- Passive to active engagement options that will be available
- Time required for each type of engagement
- Engagement benefits, such as better access to information, improved program designs, access to high-quality research, connection to a peer network for technical assistance, and efficiencies in linking design tasks to management of monitoring, evaluation, and learning

MI has already provided a presentation on the forthcoming Learning Program to some MI focal Missions to gain feedback on the program’s design and potential Learning Agendas. MI and E3/FAB staff will continue presentations during Mission visits as opportunities arise.

As each Summary of Findings is completed for the selected TOCs, MI will work with E3/FAB to launch a corresponding Learning Group. A webinar for all interested Agency staff, but especially targeted key Missions and Mission staff working on conservation strategic approaches related to the TOC, will be offered to solicit interest in participating in a Learning Group to generate and share lessons related to the TOC. The initial webinars will also make participants aware of other Learning Groups and activities, and present results from the TOC-specific Summary of Findings.

## Step 3: Developing a Learning Agenda for Cross-Mission Learning

The USAID Learning Lab defines a Learning Agenda as a set of questions related to an organization's work that, when answered, can help the organization work more effectively. The Learning Lab explains that, in the development context, Learning Agendas are often used to prove or disprove untested assumptions in a development hypothesis, which describes a TOC. In the Learning Program context, a Learning Agenda is a set of questions and topics, focused on assumptions and enabling conditions of a specified TOC (Figure 2), that a Learning Group has collectively defined to address together to improve the effectiveness of their work. MI will facilitate the development of a Learning Agenda with members of a Learning Group for each selected TOC using the Summary of Findings as the starting point. Learning Agendas may be revised during the life of the Learning Group to incorporate new ideas and developments, and can help shape research and evaluation plans.

To guide the work of Learning Groups, MI will develop a Learning Agenda document that includes these sections:

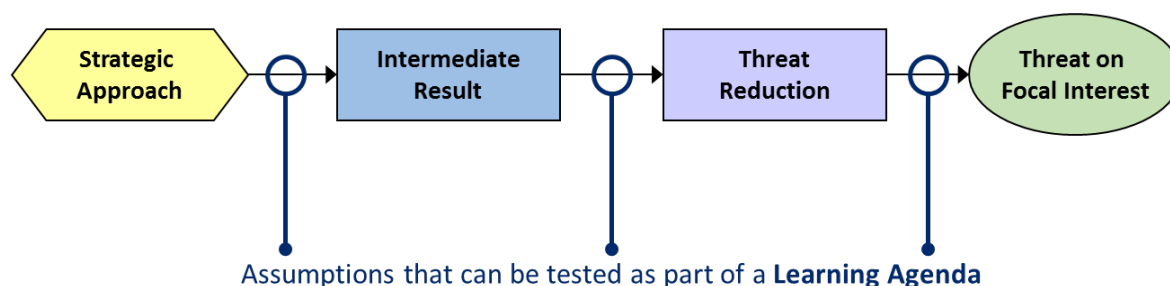
- Refined TOC that reflects the contexts of the work of Learning Group members
- Explicit questions on conditions that affect the effectiveness of the TOC
- Protocols and methods for answering the questions
- Products that will be developed

## Step 4: Facilitating Cross-Mission Knowledge Generation, Sharing, and Synthesis

To accomplish the defined Learning Agendas, the Learning Program will undertake various activities to facilitate three processes:

1. **Knowledge Generation.** Gather project results, experiences, and anecdotes—both successes and failures—from Missions and other sources that address questions in the Learning Agenda.
2. **Knowledge Sharing.** Provide relevant knowledge to Learning Groups and facilitate sharing knowledge among Learning Group members.
3. **Knowledge Synthesis.** Synthesize shared knowledge that addresses questions in the Learning Agenda.

Generating knowledge is of limited value to the Agency unless that knowledge is shared and used to design more effective strategic approaches. In facilitating knowledge generation, sharing, and synthesis, the Learning Program will focus on ensuring that lessons learned are channeled into ongoing processes of project learning and adaptation by coordinating and collaborating with all programmatic strategies of MI, E3/FAB, PPL, and other USAID Operating Units.



**Figure 2.** Generic TOC with assumptions indicated by black horizontal arrows. Every assumption can potentially be tested as part of a Learning Agenda.



Learning Group participants will determine the scope and scale of learning activities undertaken to accomplish their Learning Agenda based on participants' availability and interest in key questions. A spectrum of options for engagement from passive to active is possible. These are summarized in Table I, which provides descriptions of different types of activities, their corresponding levels of engagement, an estimated timeframe for results, and the relative quantity of new knowledge that can be expected to be generated.

Following is a selection of specific, illustrative activities that could support the three processes of knowledge generation, sharing, and synthesis. Possible involvement of E3/FAB and MI's different programmatic streams are noted.<sup>6</sup>

### Knowledge Generation

- Conduct targeted literature reviews to address questions in the Learning Agendas. (IR2 in collaboration with IR3)
- Build on existing MI activities and USAID processes to identify and extract data, information, and knowledge, including project monitoring and evaluation; project assessment, review, and reporting, such as After Action Reviews; and partner progress assessments. (IR2 with IR1 support)
- Work with Missions, as appropriate, to integrate Learning Agenda questions into project design, monitoring and evaluation, and ongoing adaptive management. In USAID's CLA parlance, there is a need to create the "pause" or "space for reflection." (IR1 with IR2 support)
- Schedule periodic workshops with participating Missions dedicated to review Learning Agendas and capture data, information, and knowledge from Mission work. (IR2 with collaboration from IR1)
- Develop simple-to-use tools to capture data, information, and knowledge that range from basic templates to dedicated online portals, and a central MI repository. (IR2,

informed by IR1, and in collaboration with all of MI).

### Knowledge Sharing

- Regularly distribute useful content to Learning Groups through email and webinars to share lessons and maintain participant interest. (IR2, E3/FAB)
- Convene regular webinars and virtual meetings for Learning Group members to share and discuss generated knowledge. (IR2 in coordination with E3/FAB)
- Develop an online platform for Learning Groups to enable online discussions and provide a place to host Learning Group-specific information and resources. (IR2 coordinating with E3/FAB and MI generally)
- Develop a cross-Mission directory that identifies areas of expertise and job responsibilities. (IR2)
- Identify opportunities to convene Learning Group members to build relationships and group identity. (IR2 coordinating with E3/FAB and MI generally)
- Use appropriate communications to encourage a culture of sharing. According to CLA principles, reframe a shared strategic approach "failure" as a CLA "success". (E3/FAB with assistance from MI generally)
- Encourage Learning Group members to use online portals for data, information, and knowledge sharing and as a knowledge repository. (IR2, IR1, E3/FAB)

### Knowledge Synthesis

- Synthesize new lessons into easily digestible documents. (IR2 with IR4)
- Distribute knowledge analyses directly to each member of the Learning Group, solicit feedback, and provide multiple channels for feedback, such as email, Skype, and webinars. (IR2)
- Post analyses to Learning Group's listserv and moderate online discussion. (IR2)
- Host webinars to share analyses and facilitate group discussion. (IR2 in coordination with E3/FAB)
- Post analyses to online knowledge repository. (IR2)

<sup>6</sup> MI team assignments are tentatively made here. The roles will be developed more fully as the Learning Program is launched. MI programmatic strategies include IR1 – Capacity Building for Best Practices in the Program Cycle, IR2 – Improve Biodiversity Conservation Approaches (i.e., the "Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program"), IR3 – Build the Evidence Base, and IR4 – Synthesis and Outreach.

- Provide a template or outline to structure discussions at the Mission level among Learning Group members. (IR2)
- Work with Missions, as appropriate, to integrate lessons from the Learning Program into project design, monitoring, evaluation, learning, and ongoing adaptive management. (IR1 with support from IR2)





As these activities are carried out, MI will apply some general principles:

- Tailor activities to the Missions using a spectrum of learning approaches (Table 1), from passive to full engagement, and provide options for support.
- Build on, and integrate into, what exists, including conceptual frameworks in CLA,

USAID business processes, and communications tools, such as ProgramNet, Learning Lab, and DEC.

- Identify, support, and highlight champions that engage with the Learning Program and encourage others to join.
- Identify incentives for voluntary participation.
- Recognize that, at least initially, MI IR2 will coordinate and facilitate the Learning Groups and manage a centralized MI repository for Learning Agenda knowledge.
- Facilitate and encourage the development of strong relationships focused on knowledge exchange.

**Table 1.** Spectrum of possible engagement for Learning Program participants

	Very Little	Little	Moderate	High
<b>Mission LOE</b>				
<b>Products/Activities</b>	Literature reviews, webinars, handbooks	Key informant research, working groups, best practice studies	In-depth studies, qualitative studies, portfolio reviews	Actively test approaches, learning reviews, learning networks, on-going data collection
<b>Partner LOE (field)</b>	Little	Little	Moderate	Very high
<b>E3/FAB LOE</b>	Very little	Little	Little	Moderate
<b>Time to Results</b>	2-4 months	6-8 months	1-1.5 years	2+ years
<b>New Knowledge</b>	Through synthesis only	Some	Some	Lots

## SECTION VI

# USER GROUPS, AUDIENCES, COMMUNICATION STRATEGY, AND PRODUCTS

The Learning Program will be open to all USAID staff with an interest in the selected TOCs. As Learning Groups are established for each TOC, members will have the option to include outside experts and implementing partners ad hoc or long term. As concrete lessons emerge, MI and E3/FAB communications teams will reach out to the larger conservation community; however, the primary audience will remain the Agency staff involved in conservation programming.

The Learning Program audience, the USAID staff, is not a monolithic group, and it is important to note the differences between offices and positions. Factors such as technical background, learning needs, and ability to participate vary. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the various audiences that are likely to be involved in the Learning Program and lists some generalized information about them, including what they might be able to contribute to the network and the kinds of engagement that might be requested of them by MI to support the Learning Program. This generalized information was compiled based on review of an assessment of USAID learning needs conducted by the Environmental Communication, Learning, and Outreach program (ECO) and interaction with USAID staff.

To maximize content uptake, MI will tailor communications to the needs, challenges, and background knowledge of these audiences. For example, key lessons from the Sustainable Livelihoods Learning Group might be developed into a short overview document that includes the most generalizable results and distributed to regional bureaus and Mission directors. A more detailed document in moderately technical language might be distributed to Learning Group participants, posted on the E3/FAB website, and then promoted through sector-specific social media channels to reach the larger conservation community. A webinar focused on the health, economic, and political aspects of the livelihoods lessons could be organized to target a broad audience of staff in the E3 bureau.

Individual communications outputs need to be integrated into the Agency's and E3/FAB's overarching communication strategies and regular

communications mediums, such as ProgramNet and Frontlines e-newsletters, where they can add significant value to key messages rather than going out as individual products with limited, one-off appeal. This will require close collaboration between the Learning Program team, the MI Communications Coordinator, E3/FAB, Communications Lead, and the Communications team in E3.

A recent learning needs assessment conducted by ECO on behalf of E3 found that Mission staff prefer to receive information through email, including e-newsletters, and short calls or webinars; and therefore, the Learning Program will primarily use these communication methods to disseminate information to internal USAID audiences.

While email and webinars are great tools for communicating with these audiences, they need to be supplemented with an online repository to store information and other resources long term. MI will use E3/FAB's forthcoming web portal or an alternative, as decided in consultation with E3/FAB, to host general information about the Learning Program, key documents, and learning effort results, such as technical notes and TOC-specific guidance, plus more easily digestible news and stories from the field, such as lessons learned, that are relevant and interesting to Learning Groups. Each Learning Group will have its own restricted-access area where group-focused information and resources can be shared. Also hosted in the restricted areas will be a directory of Learning Group members that includes contact information, area of expertise and professional interest, and outside experts on TOC subjects.

Annex B, Proposed Rollout of the Learning Program, gives a detailed example of major products that may be developed for Learning Groups.

**TABLE 2.** Audience analysis for the Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program

AUDIENCE	TECHNICAL BACKGROUND	LEARNING NEEDS	BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING EFFORTS	PROPOSED ROLE IN LEARNING PROGRAM
<b>E3/FAB Personnel</b>	Highly specialized technical knowledge in specific subject areas	Best practices for TOCs on technical specialties	Limited time to review new information and engage with learning efforts	Some candidates for leadership role in Learning Groups
	Strong general knowledge of conservation and development issues	Concise, easily digestible information that is critical to engagement	Infrequent users of USAID communications resources, such as RM Portal	Others will stay informed of progress in Learning Groups of interest and contribute when appropriate Can provide extensive Agency contacts to connect key individuals with Learning Groups  Needs to assume increasing leadership roles in the Learning Program when MI project nears completion
<b>Mission Environment Leads</b>	Strong general knowledge of conservation and development, with some specialized knowledge of priority strategic approaches in current country assignment	Interested in most generalized learning results to guide design teams	Extremely limited time	Consumers of learning when playing a role on country-level strategy and/or program-level Project Appraisal Document (PAD) design teams and/or Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) teams
			Limited ability to travel to workshops and exchanges  Infrequent users of USAID communications resources, such as RM Portal  Fatigue is associated with new learning efforts	Can be encouraged to engage with Learning Groups on relevant information from hard outputs, such as documents and webinars produced by the Learning Program  Can provide some input on Learning Agendas
<b>Mission Environment Technical Officers</b>	Strong general knowledge of conservation and development issues; may or may not have specialized knowledge on specific TOCs	Interested in learning effort results and lessons, especially for specific TOCs on current and future projects	Limited time available	Consumers of learning when playing a role on country-level strategy and program-level PAD design teams and/or TEC teams
	Foreign service nationals have strong knowledge of host country context and of previous conservation and development efforts	Seek technical documents that provide clear insight into project design and adaptation to improve outcomes and generate good evidence	Limited ability to travel to workshops and exchanges  Unstable or slow Internet connections due to frequent travel in remote locations  Foreign service nationals may have difficulty understanding highly technical documents in English	Link to implementing partners and often day-to-day managers of the implementation of subject TOCs Some staff can be engaged for Learning Agenda development and information to answer learning questions  Some staff can invite implementing partners and experts to engage in Learning Groups  Most staff read and absorb key lessons from hard outputs, such as documents and webinars, and use information for project design and RFPs

AUDIENCE	TECHNICAL BACKGROUND	LEARNING NEEDS	BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING EFFORTS	PROPOSED ROLE IN LEARNING PROGRAM
<b>Mission Program Officers</b>	General understanding of development issues and country context; less technical knowledge in conservation or TOCs	Program Office oversees CLA implementation, and staff interested in the learning process and tools and approaches used to carry out learning activities	Limited time  Priority on administration and execution of Agency and Mission policy; less ability to focus on technical aspects of Mission work	Integration of ongoing and future Learning Program activities, such as data collection and lesson generation, with Mission CLA efforts  Encourage participation of Mission leadership, technical staff in Learning Program
<b>Regional Bureau Staff</b>	Strong knowledge of focus region, general knowledge of conservation and development issues  Experience with some TOCs across multiple countries and contexts	Interested in most generalized learning results to guide Bureau	Limited time  Not directly involved with implementation, may lack up-to-date experience with TOCs	Participation in developing Learning Agenda and reviewing major learning outputs  Can contribute expertise and information relevant to Learning Agendas  Support regional cross-pollination and encourage Mission participation in learning efforts
<b>Related Sectors within USAID: Health, Food Security, GCC</b>	General development knowledge; some staff such as GCC may have conservation knowledge	Interested in learning results relevant to sector and specialty, especially human wellbeing	Lacks technical knowledge in some conservation areas  Interested in only some aspects of TOCs	Can contribute expertise and information relevant to Learning Agendas  Can benefit from relevant Learning Program knowledge and lessons
<b>Conservation Community (including Implementing Partners)</b>	Excellent knowledge and experience with conservation issues, less so with development  Some individuals have strong academic or field experience with priority TOCs	Very interested in TOCs currently engaged in or planning to work on  May seek more detailed documents relevant to current and future work	Limited time; willing to invest in relevant activities  Possible procurement sensitivity with partners in some activities	Can contribute information and experiences when invited and appropriate  Can adopt best practices and integrate lessons into current and future strategic approaches

## SECTION VII

# MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LEARNING PROGRAM

The effectiveness of the Learning Program will be monitored and adaptively managed as part of MI's overall monitoring and evaluation plan. The Learning Program will be accountable to the LOP objective and performance objectives defined for IR2 and provided below. The results chain for the overall MI program appears in Annex C, where the Learning Program LOP objective and performance objectives are mapped. The Learning Program will be monitored and adaptively managed with a focus on the following LOP objective:

***By 2017, E3/FAB and Missions attain greater understanding of conditions under which conservation strategic approaches are effective through MI documented learning.***

In addition to this LOP objective, the Learning Program will aim to achieve performance objectives using relevant indicators that are currently being developed. Table 3 lists possible indicators alongside each LOP objective and the associated target achievement date.

**TABLE 3.** LOP objectives and their possible performance indicators

IR	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE	TARGET ACHIEVEMENT DATE	INDICATORS
IR 2.1	Cross-Mission Learning Program is functional and poised for post-MI sustainability	September 30, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and quality of outcomes identified through outcome harvesting</li> <li>Assessment of E3/FAB capacity to continue Learning Program post-MI</li> </ul>
IR 2.2	Reviews of existing data and information on up to five selected TOCs are completed and submitted to E3/FAB	September 30, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of TOCs reviewed and submitted to E3/FAB</li> </ul>
IR 2.3	Learning Agendas on up to five selected theories of change are developed with Collaborative Learning Groups and submitted to E3/FAB	September 30, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Learning Agendas developed and submitted to E3/FAB</li> </ul>
IR 2.4	At least ten Missions are participating in Collaborative Learning Groups and/or otherwise engaged in cross-Mission learning	September 30, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Missions engaged in cross-Mission learning activities</li> <li>Number and quality of outcomes identified through outcome harvesting</li> </ul>
IR 2.5	A Mission-accessible log or database is created to capture evidence to support selected TOCs	September 30, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log or database created</li> </ul>
IR 2.6	Up to five analyses on cross-Mission learning processes or TOC evidence have been completed and submitted to E3/FAB	September 30, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of analyses completed and submitted</li> </ul>
IR 2.7	Evidence that focal Missions are using cross-Mission learning to inform the design and management of their biodiversity-funded conservation projects	September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and quality of outcomes identified through outcome harvesting</li> </ul>

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEARNING PROGRAM

**TABLE 4.** Recommendations for the Learning Program from analysis of organizational learning

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> (from “ <a href="#">Making Use of the Portfolio: Organizational Learning at USAID</a> ”)	<b>APPLICATION TO THE CROSS-MISSION LEARNING PROGRAM</b>
<b>Recognize Different Challenges for Internal- and External-Facing Learning Efforts</b>	<p>Recognizing that the Learning Program will primarily be an internal-facing group (engaged with outside experts as needed), it will provide facilitation assistance and ongoing technical support to Learning Groups, which will be small, focused groups with similar learning interests.</p>
<b>Motivation has to be Cultivated</b>	<p>Motivation will be developed by closely tailoring events and activities to the high-priority needs of the Learning Groups. Activities will expand or contract in scope in response to the availability of time from members to match absorptive capacity of the core group of participants. When feasible, opportunities for in-person events will be pursued to develop social capital and foster peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. The Learning Program will also investigate the use of incentives, including possibly Continuous Learning Points for USAID staff, to improve motivation and buy-in. The Learning Program will seek out feedback and modify efforts adaptively to respond to the learning needs and priorities of the group.</p>
<b>Keep Focus with Learning Agendas</b>	<p>Learning Agendas will be developed collaboratively with Learning Group members and will consist of specific high-priority questions of interest to all members and, wherever possible, relevant to the Mission’s learning needs at the country, project, and activity levels.</p>
<b>Knowledge is Retained Not Only in Documents</b>	<p>The Learning Program will use various methods and mediums to transmit knowledge to members. While it is inevitable that documents will be created, efforts will be made to distill key ideas into concise, focused products that target key learning needs. Info-graphics, webinars, and in-person meetings will also be used when appropriate to make information more easily digestible. In addition to these products, efforts will be made to use Learning Groups, software, and individualized training to diversify knowledge storage beyond documents. Finally, knowledge about ‘who knows what’ will also be cultivated and shared so that knowledge can be channeled to and retrieved from those who are best able to use and retain it.</p>



**RECOMMENDATIONS**  
(from “[Making Use of the Portfolio: Organizational Learning at USAID](#)”)

**APPLICATION TO THE CROSS-MISSION LEARNING PROGRAM**

**Focus on the People, Not the Platform**

The Learning Program will focus on building connections among people and developing a supportive environment for learning both online and offline. The online tools will begin with low-cost, easily deployed tools that are already familiar to most members (e.g. Adobe Connect, email). More advanced tools (e.g., data management system) will be deployed only if and when a clear and priority need for them is identified.

**Build on Existing Efforts**

Efforts will be made to reach out to existing and previously existing groups using platforms such as RM Portal, FRAMEweb, and Agrilinks. The IR2 team will reach out to other groups that have explored cross-Mission learning (e.g., SCAPES) to benefit from their experience and to encourage their possible participation in the Learning Program.

**Record Learning Outcomes, Not Only Knowledge Products**

A Mission-Engagement Log will be developed to record the outputs of learning activities and learning outcomes. This log will facilitate the capture and follow-up of project impacts to enable outcome harvesting analysis.

**Encourage Collaborative Implementation**

When possible, the Learning Program will encourage participants to collaborate on implementation of learning activities.

**Encourage Participation by Foreign Service National (FSN) Staff**

Special effort will be made to include FSNs in Learning Groups and to ensure that their voices are heard and that materials are appropriate for different language levels. This idea would also extend to implementing partners, when appropriate and feasible, as these organizations also have tremendous local experience, and recognizing that there may also be limitations imposed by language or internet connectivity.

**Improve M&E Systems at the Project Level**

MI's IRI team is focused on building capacity for best practices in the Program Cycle in USAID Biodiversity Programs, including improving M&E systems at the PAD and activity level. The Learning Program will build on these efforts to improve the rigor and value of learning at the cross-Mission level. Opportunities will be explored through the Learning Program to encourage the use of customized indicators (and methodologies) across Missions that target key Learning Agenda questions.



# PROPOSED ROLLOUT OF THE LEARNING PROGRAM

The following table provides an overview of the envisioned major communications products that will be used to develop and maintain the Sustainable Livelihoods Collaborative Learning Group. Subsequent Learning Groups will follow a similar structure and timeline.

**TABLE 5.** Overview of the envisioned major communications products

PRODUCT	POSSIBLE TIMING	DESCRIPTION	TARGET AUDIENCE	IMMEDIATE DESIRED ACTIONS	LONG-TERM DESIRED ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Advertisement for Intro Webinar	Q2 FY15 (completed)	Email invitation from E3/FAB to Missions, key Conservation Enterprise people to introduce webinar and learn about the Cross-Mission Learning Program. Email will include a snappy flyer from MI as an attachment.	Anyone in USAID interested in Conservation Enterprises, especially targeting E3/FAB and IRI focal Missions	Attend webinar		ABCG event invitations
Intro Webinar	Q2 FY15 (completed)	Online event with background information and presentation of generic TOC and early findings. Also give brief introduction to Cross-Mission Learning Program	Anyone in USAID interested in Conservation Enterprises, especially targeting E3/FAB and IRI focal Missions	Agree to be added to the Conservation Enterprises Learning Group email list  Participate in future Conservation Enterprises Learning Group events and activities  Be open to one-on-one discussions to help develop Learning Agenda and gather feedback on TOC	Know about and apply the generic TOC to current and future work  Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of projects	Beam Exchange Webinar

PRODUCT	POSSIBLE TIMING	DESCRIPTION	TARGET AUDIENCE	IMMEDIATE DESIRED ACTIONS	LONG-TERM DESIRED ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Summary of Findings: Conservation Enterprises Brief	Q2 FY15 (completed)	Concise document summarizing USAID findings, including simplified TOC and possible learning questions. Non-USAID findings will be provided on completion of MI-independent third-party systematic review.	Participants from webinar, plus newly interested	Read the document, apply key lessons when relevant  Participate in future webinars and Learning Group events	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of projects	IUCN CARPE technical brief on alternative livelihoods (short version)
One-on-one discussions on Learning Agenda for those interested	Q3-4 FY15	Discussions with participants to gather information on learning needs, ask for relevant Mission-level information, resources, and pitch collaborative research	Mission participants from webinar and suggested Mission contacts from E3/FAB and IRI Regional Leads	Provide input to help shape Learning Agenda  Develop bilateral relationship with MI  Agree to explore partnership with MI to accomplish Learning Agenda	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of projects	
Learning Agenda Webinar	Q4 FY15	Bring participants together for Learning Agenda discussion and finalization	Anyone in USAID interested in Conservation Enterprises, especially targeting E3/FAB and IRI focal Missions	Provide feedback on proposed Learning Agenda  Agree on Learning Agenda	Use Learning Agenda to inform evaluation activities on Conservation Enterprises	
One-page updates relevant to Conservation Enterprises TOC and Learning Agenda	FY16	Short blogs that summarize important documents from third parties that are relevant to the TOC. Links will be included in monthly emails and posted on the listserv. May also be subject of webinar series episodes	Conservation Enterprises Learning Group participants plus anyone in USAID interested in Conservation Enterprises	Read and review	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of projects	K4Health Blog

PRODUCT	POSSIBLE TIMING	DESCRIPTION	TARGET AUDIENCE	IMMEDIATE DESIRED ACTIONS	LONG-TERM DESIRED ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Moderated Listserv	FY16	<p>Moderated listserv, hosted on a platform (TBD), that allows for website and group email communication.</p> <p>Provides space for peer-to-peer information sharing and a single place to store online resources</p>	Conservation Enterprises participants (participants in previous webinars who subscribed)	<p>Skim for and read relevant content</p> <p>Participate in discussions with peers on topics on Learning agenda</p>	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management and evaluation of projects	<p>CCNet, FSN forums, FRAMEweb discussion forums with auto-generated emails</p> <p>Agrilinks discussions</p>
Webinar Series	TBD (possibly quarterly)	Webinar to present new information (e.g., BCN findings, Central Africa findings) gather feedback, and allow for peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. With online discussions (online forum)	Conservation Enterprises Learning Group participants, plus anyone in USAID interested. When particularly interesting and/or broad-ranging content, may open up to larger audience	<p>Engage in discussions</p> <p>Continued participation in future events</p>	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of projects	TOPS webinar (FSN)
Monthly Update Email (through listserv)	Monthly	Present new information and findings from assessment of past and current Conservation Enterprises. Includes blog, key references, summary of online discussions, announcements	Conservation Enterprises Learning Group participants, plus anyone in USAID interested	<p>Read newsletter</p> <p>Continued engagement and participation in events</p>	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of Conservation Enterprises projects	FSN monthly emails
Learning Agenda Findings Document	FY17	Document summarizing findings from IR2 collaboration with Missions and other Learning Group members	Conservation Enterprises Learning Group participants, plus anyone in USAID interested	Read document, pass on to relevant colleagues	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of projects	

PRODUCT	POSSIBLE TIMING	DESCRIPTION	TARGET AUDIENCE	IMMEDIATE DESIRED ACTIONS	LONG-TERM DESIRED ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
Webinar Presentations on Learning Agenda Findings	FY17	Presentation of summary of findings from assessment of past and current Conservation Enterprises. Also solicit feedback and encourage group discussion on the findings	Conservation Enterprises Learning Group participants, plus anyone in USAID interested, also general public	Engage in discussions Provide feedback Learn about and pass on knowledge gained from webinar	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of Conservation Enterprises projects	
Communication Spin-offs from Learning Agenda Findings (with IR4 and MI communications person)	As important findings become available	Documents and online events tailored to the wider conservation community which present key lessons as they become available from Learning Agenda Findings research or other sources	Wider conservation community	Engage in discussions Provide feedback Learn about and pass on knowledge gained from webinar	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of Conservation Enterprises projects	Agrilinks blogs
In-person Workshop	FY16 or FY17	Workshop to present and discuss results of Learning Agenda Findings. Possibly wrap-up Learning Group	Most engaged Conservation Enterprises Learning Group participants, plus some outside experts (if appropriate)	Attend, participate, and engage Learn about and pass on knowledge gained from workshop	Apply knowledge (evidence) gained in design, management, and evaluation of Conservation Enterprises projects Continue to interact with E3/FAB past life of MI through the Learning Group or other platforms to share lessons and generate new knowledge	<a href="#">Food Security and Nutrition Network Knowledge Sharing Meeting</a>

# RESULTS CHAIN FOR THE MEASURING IMPACT PROGRAM

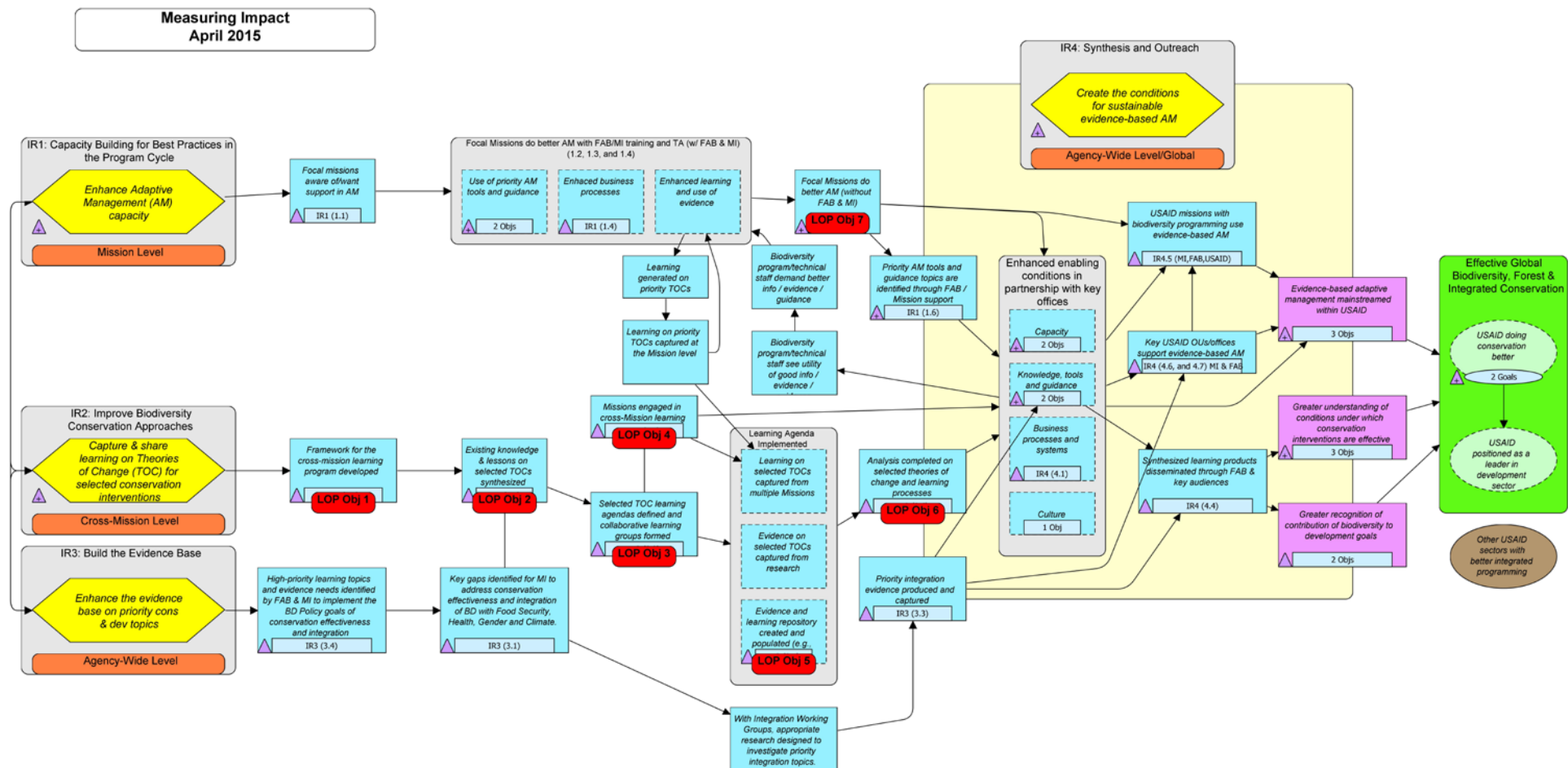


TABLE 6. Key IR performance objectives included in the MI Results Chain

IR	PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE	TARGET ACHIEVEMENT DATE
IR 2.1	Cross-Mission Learning Program is functional and poised for post-MI sustainability	September 30, 2017
IR 2.2	Reviews of existing data and information on up to five selected TOCs are completed and submitted to E3/FAB	September 30, 2016
IR 2.3	Learning Agendas on up to five selected theories of change are developed with Collaborative Learning Groups and submitted to E3/FAB	September 30, 2016
IR 2.4	At least ten Missions are participating in Collaborative Learning Groups and/or otherwise engaged in cross-Mission learning	September 30, 2017
IR 2.5	A Mission-accessible log or database is created to capture evidence to support selected TOCs	September 30, 2017
IR 2.6	Up to five analyses on cross-Mission learning processes or TOC evidence have been completed and submitted to E3/FAB	September 30, 2016
IR 2.7	Evidence that focal Missions are using cross-Mission learning to inform the design and management of their biodiversity-funded conservation projects	September 2017

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Biodiversity Cross-Mission Learning Program (Learning Program):** A collaborative effort between the MI project and E3/FAB to systematically capture and share lessons on theories of change for common conservation strategic approaches in the USAID biodiversity portfolio.

**Community of Practice:** A group of practitioners that share a concern, problems, or passion about a topic and deepen their knowledge and expertise by continuously interacting.

**Collaborative Learning Group (Learning Group):** A group of Mission or Operating Unit staff that collaborate to generate, use, and share learning on explicit questions and topics for a specified TOC. A Learning Group can include implementing partners, on invitation by Mission staff as appropriate and feasible. The USAID Program Cycle Learning Guide identifies the learning network approach (comparable to the Learning Group approach) as particularly useful in building intention into the learning process. The Learning Lab's [Learning Networks Resources Center](#) provides relevant resources, information on phases and characteristics, and stories shared among learning networks. USAID's [Practices of Successful Learning Networks](#) provides additional information on important characteristics of learning networks.

**Data:** Raw, unanalyzed, quantitative and qualitative material.

**Experience:** The fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation.

**Implementing Partners:** Entities that are engaging stakeholders in the implementation of a given strategic approach at specified sites.

**Information:** Analyzed data, often presented in a form that is specifically designed for a given decision-making task, and transmitted to or received by decision makers.

**Knowledge:** The absorption, assimilation, understanding, and appreciation of information.

**Learning:** A continuous process of analyzing a wide variety of information and knowledge leading to iterative adaptation of strategy, project design, and implementation, to sustain the most effective, efficient path to achieve development objectives. Sources of information and knowledge include evaluation findings, monitoring data, innovations, new learning that brings to light new best practices or calls into question received wisdom and collected observations, and [tacit knowledge](#) from those who have particularly deep or unique insight in a given area.

**Learning Agenda:** Most basically, a set of questions and topics focused on assumptions and enabling conditions of a specified TOC that a Learning Group has collectively defined to address to improve work effectiveness. The reference document that will guide the work of the Learning Group includes four elements: (1) refined TOC that reflects the contexts of Learning Group members, (2) explicit questions that members have related to the effectiveness of that TOC, (3) protocols and methods for answering those questions, and (4) products that will be developed. A Learning Agenda may be dynamically revised during the life of the Learning Group to incorporate new ideas and developments.

**Lessons:** Useful knowledge that results from direct experience.

**Organizational Learning:** Knowledge creation and diffusion through an organization that naturally occur in and between organizations, but also can be actively promoted or discouraged by actions taken by organization members.

**Results Chain:** Graphical depiction of a *theory of change*. Includes a *strategic approach*, *actions*, *intermediate results*, *threat-reduction results*, and the *biodiversity focal interests*. A results chain explicitly depicts the assumed causal linkage

between the implementation of a strategic approach and the achievement of desired outcomes through a series of expected intermediate results (Foundation of Success. 2009. Using result chains to improve action effectiveness: an FOS how-to guide. Foundations of Success, Bethesda, Maryland, USA [online]

<http://www.fosonline.org/resources/using-results-chains>; Margoluis, R., C. Stem, V. Swaminathan, M. Brown, A. Johnson, G. Placci, N. Salafsky, and I. Tilders. 2013. Results chains: a tool for conservation action design, management, and evaluation. *Ecology and Society* 18(3): 22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05610-180322>).

For the Learning Program, MI is assuming that the basic factors for defining a common results chain among various mechanisms and activities will be the strategic approach, such as enforcement and compliance; intermediate results, such as improved detection of illegal hunting; a desired threat-reduction result, such as reduction in illegal hunting; and a biodiversity focal interest, such as a protected species. While Mission PADs or mechanisms generally describe a TOC for biodiversity project implementations by outlining inputs and the desired outputs as part of the logical framework, the results chains will use these factors to more explicitly define the assumed causal linkages between the inputs and outputs toward the goal.

**Strategic Approach:** A set of actions undertaken by the implementing partners to reach one or more results and ultimately reduce threats to improve the viability of the biodiversity focal interest. A starting point for classifying strategic approaches into categories is the taxonomy developed by the [Conservation Measures Partnership](#) (CMP). 2005. *Taxonomies of direct threats and conservation actions*. CMP, Washington, D.C. A Learning Agenda is designed around a common conservation strategic approach.

**Summary of Findings:** A document that summarizes evidence and apparent evidence gaps associated with a specified TOC for use as a starting point for the Learning Groups as they develop Learning Agendas. It typically\* will include five components: (1) specific TOC of possible relevance to Missions, (2) synthesis of evidence from the literature supporting these TOCs, (3) identification of apparent gaps in the evidence from the literature, (4) potential learning questions, and (5) possible Learning Group participants. (\*These components may be provided through multiple communications products, such as a document plus a webinar, rather than all in a single document.)

**Theory of Change (TOC):** The term is used to generally describe the sequence of outcomes that is expected to occur as a result of implementation of an action (Weiss, C. H. 1995. "Nothing as practical as a good theory: exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families." Pages 65-92, in J.P. Connell, J. L. Aber, and G. Walker, editors. *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: concepts methods, and context*. Aspen Institute, Washington, D.C., USA; <http://www.theoryofchange.org>). A Learning Agenda is designed to assess the assumptions in a theory of change for a common conservation strategic approach.